

Equal Opportunity is a Leadership Issue

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Equal Opportunity is a Leadership Issue

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Leaders will instill the stamina and toughness in each individual Marine while creating an environment that values honor, integrity and caring for their fellow Marines. This desirable environment, free of prejudice, disrespect, and mistrust, exists when we treat each other with dignity and respect. Therefore, I charge every member of our Corps to hold each other accountable for adherence to these standards.

*General Hagee
Marine Corps Commandant*

Introduction

In spite of this admonition, lower level commanders fall short in fulfilling these high expectations dictated by the Commandant. It is my assertion that, equal opportunity is not, as it should be, handled as a leadership issue. cursory attention is paid to this important matter by virtue of superficial annual training comprised of the showing of a brief video that glazes over the issue.

The goal of this wholly inadequate training is the promotion of a "harmonious" work environment yet, in reality, treats this issue with kid gloves. Equal opportunity does not warrant more intense scrutiny or become a concern, unless an incident occurs. It is not treated as a proactive measure requiring continual attention by and for Marines resulting in a more expanded situational awareness.

In a situation where a Marine is being accused of being insensitive, comprehensive follow-up training is not required but more often there is a direct move towards a harsh or severe punishment. The Unit is then subjected to an emergency PME where there is then an emphasis on the purpose of equal opportunity. Such a reaction is, in my estimation, a "knee jerk" reaction with a "band-aid" approach to solving a decidedly more complex problem. The shortfalls in the program make any isolated incident a major issue rather than a manageable problem

that could be circumvented through proactive training.

Shortfalls

Equal opportunity annual training needs to be more comprehensive and integrated more thoroughly throughout the year. Given the nature and extent of the subject it cannot be addressed by a single, short video and a single discussion when it should be a continuous, ongoing program. In that way, Marines would come to understand the importance of equal opportunity not as a burden to be tolerated but a fundamental concept to be embraced.

Marine Corps equal opportunity training should be reevaluated, reassessed and revamped so the trainers receive more intensive training in order to learn how to impart a more expansive training to the individual Marine. Provided with these tools, our leaders will better promote understanding of equal opportunity that will help ensure the harmonious environment sought by command.

Equal opportunity should also be included in an annual standdown, which will ensure continued adherence to the precepts furthered by this issue. Climate surveys, while useful tools, are not as affective as a command taking charge of the issue through more extensive training. This proactive approach eliminates the dangers of overreaction that so frequently mark the current process of addressing allegations of insensitivity.

Further, such an approach has the added value of focusing on the benefits of an equal opportunity program as a leadership tool.

Danger

Commands lacking in harmony will be burdened with decreased cohesion. Such a decrease leaves the average Marine more susceptible to negative, outside influences, such as gangs and hate groups.

Most deviant groups use the shortfalls in the system to their advantage by targeting susceptible Marines and recruiting them into their organizations. Lack of command cohesion opens the door to non-Marine opportunists and allows them to lure the Marine into a false sense of belonging and "brotherhood."

Benefits

Comprehensive EO training will enable Marines to see that core values, instilled at the Marine Recruiting Depot are a reality in the operating forces. The development of the individual Marine will continue to expand on an ongoing basis. The individual Marine will feel that command is involved in his or her development, making it possible for them to be a more productive Marine resulting in a more efficient Corps.

Removing the stigma of equal opportunity as isolated to minority groups will enable leadership to inculcate the individual Marine with a more inclusive role. Increasing the knowledge regarding equal opportunity will make it more of a

benefit for all by forcing them to take a more active role, resulting in an ideal work environment.

History

History should be used as a tool to instruct Marines about progression of values in our society as well as our beloved Corp. George Santayana said, "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it." Marines should be encouraged to not only study the history of the Marine Corps, but also their own history. History should be viewed as a comprehensive discipline needed to better analyze not only where we are coming from but also where we are going.

Marines have used history as a successful recruiting, retention and teaching tool, to instill in the individual Marine a sense of belonging and pride for Corps, country and service.

Proposals

Marine Corps Headquarters should develop mobile training teams that can provide training for larger units, which will in turn help increase unit cohesion resulting in diminishment of Marine vulnerability to outside forces as well as reductions in the number of incidents reported annually.

Reported incidents could then be handled at the lowest command level allowing a more progressive rise up the chain of command. The commander is then burdened only with the need to determine punishment subsequent to a more thorough low-level

evaluation and analysis of the incident.

Severity of the punishment should be directed by, but not limited to, Extra Military Instruction. In holding a particular Marine accountable, it forces them to address the issue in which they were found in violation without the need for more draconian measures.

Conclusion

Equal opportunity seeks to provide an environment where all individuals, regardless of background, race or ethnicity, can succeed in United States Marine Corps. The Commandant's EO policy is clearly a message for all Marines, but the message must remain clear and focused on achievement of the objective. In order to optimize success, command must see equal opportunity for what it is a leadership issue.

Bibliography

Commandant's EO Statement 2003

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